/Chinese, Chinese Moslems and Sedentary Tibetans/

484 712 cities and the great waterways of China, and had traversed her wide plains by the iron track at speed which seemed fabulous to the owners of these little shops. The static inhabitants saw them come, heard them talk, watched them go, but failed to understand the matters of which they spoke, for, to them everything which they had never seen was unreal, vague, remote and seemed to bear no relation to daily life. Enough for them that today they [432] had sold three boxes of matches, two packets of cigarettes and handful of salt. They cared little for travellers' tales and probably believed none of them....

712 512 [701] [352] [276] The restless soldiers of the garrison rushed to and from the large town, but the old inhabitants cared for none of these things, and when the fortress gates were closed each night they put up the shutters of the little shops and crept under miserable coverlets to lie on the mud kangs, fill their opium pipes and escape into the land of illusion and dreams, which was the only wider horizon that they knew." (pp. 17-20).

361 443 [186] While she was visiting in Tun-huang Miss Cable observed: "The people of Tunhwang (Tun-huang) viewed themselves as the elite of Gobi land, and were abnormally proud of their oasis. They had plenty of money to spend and opened their markets freely to goods from other places, but prided themselves on being a self-supporting community, not only in respect of food, but also in regard to brides and bridegrooms, and they did not approve of marriages arranged between their own children and those of other towns." (ibid.) The people in this district were very conservative. 181 436 441 "One sign of its deep-seated conservatism," observed Miss Cable, "was the backward system of money exchange which it retained. Long after the silver dollar had become the common basis of coinage on the main road, Tunhwang businessmen looked askance at it, and preferred the shoe of silver which was chipped down, weighed up and exchanged for copper coinage. Here again Tunhwang set its standard by allowing one hundred worn and valueless cash to be introduced into each string of a thousand. It became therefore worthwhile to collect these useless copers in other towns, cart them to Tunhwang and dispose of them there. When the reluctance to admit the silver dollar was finally overcome, merchants still discriminated between different issues and refused one or the other according to fancy. The coin stamped with the dragon was depreciated in favor of one designated as the 'standing man'-which was Hongkong currency. The dollar bearing the head of Yuan Shih-kai found favor, and for some reason the third-year issue was more highly valued than any other, but when a new coin stamped with the head of Sun Yat-sen appeared, this Gobi town absolutely refused to recognize it because the new president's effigy was small and unimpressive. No other explanation was offered than the words 'The head seems small', but no one would use it.

I: Washington S-4 (no date) 1956 AF13 Northwest China AF13

use it. In this little backwater town large business deals were effected, but each roll of dollars received for payment was opened, the contents carefully examined, and the individual coins valued a little higher or a little lower according to the Tunhwang standard." (pp. 69-70).

The landowners in the Tunhwang district are mainly Chinese whose ancestors were established here very long ago. The Chinese farmers are more conservative than the town folks. The rural rural pattern here is different from that of other parts of the Northwest. Here the farmsteads are dotted over the area, each stands in the center of its own land and each at a considerable distance from the other. The larger farms are surrounded by a high wall which is a small fortification, and inside the wall is a substantial house made of sun-dried bricks and excellent timber. Most of the farmsteads are spacious and built to accommodate large numbers of people, for it is customary that all the members of a clan live together in their generations.

The author of The Gobi Desert recorded another interesting feature of the Tunhwang oasis. The record says that Tunhwang is divided into as many sections as there are prefectures in the whole of the province of Kansu. Its colonization brought men from all areas, who were anxious to honor the cities which they represented, by erecting temple buildings. The result is that the traveller wanders through the oasis as through a replica of the whole province of Kansu, stepping from the section called after the town of Chingchow to that called Liangchow, from Kaotai to Pingfan, or from Pingliang to Titao, in the course of an afternoon stroll. Near one of these temples was a very old carved stone figure of a man, which was not an idol but was said to represent a historic personage.

Of the Chinese people of the wayside in the Gobi Desert Miss Cable writes: "The intense isolation of the inhabitant of a small oasis, and the extraordinarily low standard of life imposed upon him, produce a strange mentality. His normal condition is torpor. He sits or lies on his mud bed and thinks of nothing. Only when a traveler arrives does he experience the discomfort of rousing himself, but then though it may be cold or windy, he must leave the pleasant stuffiness of his bed-living-room, throw off the greasy coverlet which he has drawn over his crossed legs, come into the open and give the service, which is demanded of him as innkeeper. The life of the innkeeper's wife is more bare and poor. Clothing, which has some place in the thought of nearly every woman, is, to her, absolutely nothing but a protection from cold and a covering for her nakedness. The other incidents of her life are concerned with food and the birth of her children. She knows that her husband has some money, but she has never thought of money as a means of securing comforts

2: Teichman G-5 (1919) 1921 AF13 Northwest China AF13

501 forty feet in length by ten to fifteen in breadth, with the lumber piled up in the centre to form a platform a foot or so above the water, on which we pitched our tents; I have seldom struck a pleasanter method of travel in China, the only objection being the floor of pine logs, which meant that if one dropped any small art[illegible] it was irrecoverable except by taking the raft to pieces. We subsequently learned that we had been lucky in securing particularly fine rafts, as they consisted of a flotilla of telegraph poles *en route* from the Kokonor forests above Hsining to Ninghsia for the construction of a new telegraph line from that place across the Ordos desert to Paot'ou.

431 We were delayed a few days in Lanchou while our rafts were being got ready and various other preparations being made. It is as well to put a few days' provisions on board to last till one gets to Chungwei; all kinds of presents were thrust upon us in the way of supplies by our hospitable hosts, the Governor and his staff, including a skin bag of the famous dried apricots which are thus exported from Central Tibet—or perhaps they even come from India.

436 A new supply of silver had also to be secured, for at the time we were in Kansu the old-fashioned lumps of silver and strings of cash were still the only currency available; two years later travelling in Shensi and Szechuan we were able to use silver dollars and copper cents even in the most out of the way parts, a great convenience; the buying up of the cash for the export of the copper they contain, which is now going on so extensively throughout China, may be illegal, but it is hardly to be regretted by the tourist in the interior, if it means the gradual disappearance of this dirty and cumbersome form of currency.

487 We finally left Lanchou on August 26 on our overland
133 march to Powan, distant three marches of 65, 80, and 70 li respectively. The road runs down the left bank of the Yellow River for about 15 li, and then, turning north up a gully, winds through a maze of low waterless hills of loess for the
[36] rest of the way to the walled village of Ch'ang Ch'uantzu in the valley of a brackish rivulet, the end of the first stage. The second day's march is through similar desert hills to the hamlet of Hsikou. In places the small shallow valleys are cultivated and produce millet and inferior melons, but

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang AI-2~~

miserable specimens as to be refused out of hand by the Deacon-in-Charge, without even referring the matter to us. Some owners, however, being very persistent, it soon became necessary for us personally to put in an appearance, to view the lame, blind, aged, bony and sore-backed creatures which presently paraded the compound court in a long, melancholy procession. Some of the worst specimens, however, wore splendid harness and finely-wrought saddles, borrowed for the occasion; but we were not to be taken in by such childish deceptions! Having ourselves already had some experience both in selling as well as in buying, we remained quite unimpressed by the flashily-groomed beast which clattered down the road, urged to a gallop by the owner, who declared himself in despair at having to part with the 'finest mule that Shensi has yet produced,' but which, stripped of its trappings, generally stood revealed as antique and emaciated, and with flanks heaving with exhaustion consequent on such an unusual effort. Nevertheless, one by one, we steadily added to our teams, until nine mules were comfortably champing side by side in the stable. Two large strong carts were next bought and then carefully overhauled in view of the heavy strain ahead. Our own small Peking cart which had already done valiant service was destined to carry us and our bedding, for though this conveyance made no provision for a possible lie-down at night, we yet chose it on account of the easier movement it afforded than the rolling and lurching of the larger vehicles, each of which, covered with matting and lined with felts, and with wheels studded with protruding iron nails, could carry a load of two thousand pounds.

Naturally enough, such preparations needed a considerable supply of ready money, which from the

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
Sinkiang-Al-3

436 beginning of our life in the North-West had depended on the selling of our cheques to Chinese merchants, who, on their side, seeing that highway robbery was frequent, were glad to hand us over large sums in cash. As was always the case, just when we were needing money a traveller arrived, so that we had no difficulty in securing the amount required. The Chinese business manager of the compound also saw to it that we gained a small percentage on the transaction, while he made himself responsible to see that we were not cheated by the introduction of inferior coins, as is too often done, in the following manner. The Mexican dollar bears on it the effigy of Yüan Shih Kai, the first President of the Chinese Republic, but who died in the fourth year of his Presidency; the coins having been carried on to a further date, are inscribed as of the seventh, eighth, and even ninth year of the Presidency of the said Yüan Shih Kai. The unfortunate populace, however, painfully experienced in being made the loser by every manipulation of the money-market, and realising the likelihood of being duped once again (for how could a dead man issue a currency?) steadily refused to accept any coins dated after his death, so that at every transaction each dollar must now be scrutinised, while everyone dated beyond the third year of Yüan Shih Kai bears a depreciated value.

000 Our time for preparation was brief. A few boxes always stood in readiness to receive our personal possessions, it being necessary to pack everything up whenever we left Suchow for more than a few days, our room being poorly protected against robbers, and our movements always uncertain owing to the perpetual political ferment of the country. Wearing, as we always did, the Chinese dress, we needed only to take our complete summer wardrobe of black sateen trousers, blue cotton

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang Af 1~~

coats, black silk skirt, and stitched-cotton hat as protection from the sun. But a good supply of shoes was needed in view of long tramps, and these were made for us in velvet, with a thick stitched-cotton sole, by good sewing-women, such as are easy to find in any town of China. Provision for cold nights, or change in the seasons, was made by the purchase of a soft, warm lamb's-skin coat. Moreover, among our most valued possessions were the few utensils for kitchen use, two saucepans, a cake-tin, and a couple of jugs, also a tiny cooking-stove consisting of a small oven on four legs which had been brought to Kansu forty years previously by Miss Annie Taylor, the Tibetan pioneer missionary. These last were carefully crated, and then committed to the care of the Chinese Missionaries who were to remain behind in charge of Suchow. One of the carts was also entirely devoted to the transport of the Gospels, tracts and posters needed for the expedition, all of which had reached us by book-post from the coast, and on the sale of which we depended largely for our daily needs. The conveyance of money presents much practical difficulty to every traveller in China, paper money being only of value in the city where it is issued. The Mexican dollar already mentioned is in itself both bulky and weighty, and so is the copper coin which is advantageous on account of the different rates of silver to copper exchange existing between one city and another; a string of carts therefore will sometimes carry coppers as sole cargo, cash being so heavy that a man can barely carry on his shoulders the value of one pound sterling. Our cartload of books consequently represented a sum of money sufficient to buy the daily food of the party for a considerable time.

As the day of departure drew near, our grinding-stone was busy from dawn till dark converting the wheat

shops there, but must leave the central part of the city before dark- 563
ness sets in.

There had been a great deal of progress since my first visit to 651
the city in the spring of 1904. In the summer of 1905 the old, very 185
reactionary viceroy was replaced by one who had been in Berlin and
Petersburg. This man had sent Splingaert, the interpreter of Baron
von Richthofen, known to every Sinologist, /153/ in order to find
European engineers who should open up a new era for the province of
Kansu. He wanted to re-open the cloth factory, and build sugar and
champagne factories. The very good coal mines which lay a short [34]
day's journey south of the city were to be made more accessible by
means of a small railway. But above all, a university and technical
school were to be opened, and, for strategic purposes, an iron bridge
built across the Hwang Ho.

That was the program which everyone was discussing in this city
of no newspapers, but there were for the most part unbelievably ex-
aggerated and distorted rumors about it. Because a Chinese province
is an independent unit, the governor-general was obliged to raise a
large part of the funds which were necessary before he could carry
out his program. He therefore wanted to open up another mint in [436]
which special Kansu money was to be coined and the silver and gold
for this he wanted to get from the provincial government. He there- [316]
fore needed European foundry experts; prospects of mining conces-
sions for Europeans no longer existed here. But everyone knew that
there was gold as well as silver in Kansu; for Kansu, like Szechwan,
borders on Tibet and since ancient times gold has been washed in the
rivers on the border.

It was in connection with this very program that I came into fre- 574
quent contact with the higher officials during my three-weeks' stay 524
in Lanchow fu. I was often obliged to attend Chinese dinners at which
the Chinese are so fond of testing the drinking capacity of a foreigner.
Their drinking games are particularly dangerous, being a sort of
morra in which the loser must empty cups the size of a thimble,
filled with warmed whiskey. For linguistic reasons alone it is very
difficult for foreigners to win. But I found that the cultivated Chinese
and Manchu begins to warm up to a foreigner when the latter,
through this sort of thing, comes closer to him as a human being.
Thus I learned the game "dry" from one of my servants and in the
course of time I had many a "Chinese queue" on my conscience. I 574
was amazed to see how brief the emotional flare-ups of these people
were; or could they, perhaps, even if they had had too much of a

122 direct road, two wagon-loads full of expedition equipment to Hsining fu which was to be my next goal. I myself took along on my circuitous bypaths the entire travel money for the coming years, which consisted of two small mule packs of silver bars. No one had been willing to give me the necessary guarantee for direct transport, and so I could not risk sending this silver along with the other equipment. I could perhaps have bought a few checks on companies in Hsining fu, but in that case I would surely have been given much "poorer" silver. It is not easy to find good, pure silver in the smaller cities, especially in the western part of the kingdom. Besides, one incurs the danger of being very badly cheated. Thus, I had cashed a great many of my checks in Lanchow fu. These /157/ inland checks are small Chinese documents resembling letters, without any European marks on them. They are payable to a certain weight of silver with a certain number of ounces and are made out to any name you wish. Mine were addressed to "the banking firm at the sign of the lucky shot" in Lanchow fu and made out by their agents in Shanghai to a Mr. Li whom I did not know. The German director of the Hankow branch of the German-Asiatic Bank once told me that on the basis of enquiries he had made of his comprador (1) he had discovered that this firm was operating

436 453 453

1. Comprador is a Spanish word and belongs in the vocabulary of pidgin-English. A comprador is a trustworthy Chinese of experience who is absolutely necessary to every foreign business firm. He vouches for the solvency of the Chinese firms and controls the accuracy of the Chinese checks and currency, for there are only a few foreigners who possess the necessary knowledge for testing these. He acts as proxy for the Chinese public, in fact in many business firms he is the Chinese partner.

illegally. However, the director of an English bank in Tientsin told me, after making similar enquiries, that this was by far the largest bank in the place and one that annually handles millions. Now, I do not wish to accuse those European gentlemen who gave me such contradictory information - both pieces of information were after all based on reports of their compradors - but I simply want to show the difficulty involved in carrying on business with the interior. Even the Chinese of the coast know very little